

Pre-Trip Close-the-House Checklist

Checklist · 63 items · 10 sections

A close-down checklist for securing your home before vacation. Distinct from packing: this is what to do with the house you're leaving behind. Built from Allstate and State Farm home security guides, USPS Hold Mail, FEMA home safety, and This Old House maintenance practices.

Open the editable version online:

<https://genechecklist.com/checklist/pre-trip-close-house-checklist>

SECURITY AND LOCKS

- Lock the front door, back door, and any side entry doors; deadbolt every exterior door
HIGH
- Lock the door from the garage into the house (burglars treat this as the weak link)
HIGH
- Lock the basement door and any walkout basement entry
HIGH
- Close and lock every window, including second-floor windows that feel 'too high to reach'
HIGH
- Close and lock summer-open windows in attics, sunrooms, bathrooms
HIGH
- Lower and lock sliding door bars or dowels in the track of patio doors
HIGH
- Close the garage door; engage the manual emergency-release lock or a C-clamp on the track
HIGH
- Lock side gates, backyard gates, and shed doors with a padlock
HIGH
- Change smart lock codes (August, Schlage Encode, Yale Assure); share a one-time code only with your house-sitter
- Test camera systems (Ring, Nest Cam, Arlo, Eufy); confirm remote app access from your phone over cellular
HIGH
- Charge battery-powered cameras and doorbells, or confirm wired power is stable
- Set outdoor lights on a varied timer schedule (myQ, Kasa, hardwired timer); avoid identical on/off times every night

- Put a TV or living-room lamp on a smart timer (Kasa, Lutron Caseta) to mimic an occupied evening
- Remove spare keys from outdoor hiding spots: under the mat, in fake rocks, on door frames
- HIGH**
- Hand a real spare key to a trusted neighbor or friend, not the front porch

MAIL, PACKAGES, AND DELIVERIES

- Submit USPS Hold Mail at usps.com (free, 3-30 days)
- HIGH**
Pick 'carrier delivers accumulated mail on the day I return.'
- Pause Amazon Subscribe & Save deliveries or set a vacation hold on recurring shipments
- Pause newspaper, magazine, and meal-kit subscriptions (HelloFresh, Blue Apron) for your trip dates
- Route incoming packages to an Amazon Locker, Amazon Hub Counter, or a neighbor instead of your porch
- Ask a neighbor to grab any UPS, FedEx, or DoorDash deliveries that slip through anyway
- Do NOT post travel plans, flight selfies, or 'leaving today' updates on social media until after you return

HIGH

UTILITIES AND ENERGY

- Set thermostat (Nest, Ecobee, Honeywell) to 55-60°F winter or 78-82°F summer; use 'Eco' or 'Away' mode
- HIGH**
- Switch water heater to vacation mode, or lower the setpoint to 'Vacation' or roughly 50°F
- HIGH**
- Unplug small electronics to kill phantom load: toasters, coffee makers, microwaves, desktop computers, TVs, gaming consoles, phone chargers
- Turn refrigerator setting down one notch; eat or toss perishables that will spoil before you return
- Empty the dishwasher; leave the door cracked open to prevent mildew
- Empty washer and dryer; leave both doors cracked open
- Run garbage disposal with ice cubes and a lemon wedge to clear smells
- Take out all trash and recycling; rinse bins; arrange a neighbor to bring them in on pickup day

PLUMBING AND WATER

- Shut off the main water supply at the house valve if leaving more than 7 days (especially in winter)

HIGH

- Wash, dry, and put away every dirty dish (standing water attracts pests and smells)
- Turn off the ice maker at the refrigerator shutoff or the valve behind it
- Disconnect outdoor hoses and drain them; in winter, shut interior hose-bib valves and open exterior spigots

HIGH

- Run hot water at every sink, tub, shower for 30 seconds to fill P-traps (block sewer gas)
- Flush every toilet once; confirm none are running
- Check under sinks, around water heater, and at washing-machine hoses for active leaks

HIGH

PLANTS AND PETS

- Confirm pet boarding or in-home pet sitter; send written care instructions (feeding times, meds, walks)

HIGH

- Provide pet sitter with vet's name, address, after-hours number, plus a backup emergency contact

HIGH

- Set up indoor plant watering: schedule visits, install self-watering globes (Plant Nanny, Blumat), or move to shaded grouped spot
- Deep-water outdoor pots and garden beds the morning you leave; move container plants to shade
- Leave pet food, treats, leashes, medications, and carrier in one labeled bin for the sitter

FIRE AND SAFETY

- Press the test button on every smoke detector and CO detector; replace any low/chirping battery

HIGH

- Unplug irons, hair tools (Dyson Airwrap, flat irons), curling irons, and small heating appliances

HIGH

- Confirm every candle and incense stick is fully extinguished (check guest rooms and bathrooms)

HIGH

- Turn off gas at the meter if instructed by your utility for long trips; confirm pilots off
- Unplug stovetop appliances: toaster oven, air fryer, electric kettle, coffee maker, slow cooker

HIGH

- Unplug space heaters, electric blankets, heated mattress pads at the wall, not just the switch

HIGH

INFORM TRUSTED PEOPLE

- Give house-sitter or neighbor: key, written instructions, your cell number, return date, alarm/lock code
HIGH
- Notify alarm monitoring (ADT, Vivint, SimpliSafe, Ring Alarm) of travel dates and house-sitter's name
HIGH
- Call local police non-emergency line; request a Vacation House Check (free patrol drive-bys)
- Share itinerary, flight numbers, and accommodation address with one family member
HIGH
- Tell a neighbor what your car looks like if it stays in the driveway, and what does NOT belong there

DOCUMENTS AND FINANCES

- Lock jewelry, watches, and small valuables in a home safe (SentrySafe, Liberty) or off-site
HIGH
- Carry only the cash and cards you need for the trip; store the rest in the safe
- Notify every bank and credit card issuer of travel dates and destinations (avoid fraud holds)
HIGH
- Back up copies of passport, driver's license, insurance cards to secure cloud (1Password, Google Drive)
- Confirm homeowners insurance is current; save the claims phone number in your phone

SMART HOME AND TECH SETUP

- Confirm home Wi-Fi router and modem stay powered on (cameras, alarms, smart locks need the network)
HIGH
- Enable 'Away' or 'Vacation' mode in your smart-home hub (Google Home, Apple Home, SmartThings, Alexa Guard)
HIGH
- Enable Alexa Guard or Nest Aware sound detection for glass-break and smoke alarms while away
- Turn on push notifications for door, motion, and camera events on your phone; test one alert before leaving
HIGH

DAY-OF FINAL WALK-THROUGH

- Final lap: walk every room, check every window latch, every exterior door, the door to the garage
HIGH
- Last check: alarm armed, thermostat set, water main shut, garage closed, lights on timer, keys with neighbor, phone charged
HIGH